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ABSTRACT

British Columbia's Year 2000 Program mandated the inclusion of all children into their neighborhood schools, thereby requiring each school to provide all special-education services for students who need them. This paper presents findings of a study that assessed the impact of the mandate on instructional programs in four suburban Vancouver elementary schools. Interviews were conducted with 27 classroom teachers and 4 special-education teachers at the primary-grade level, who also completed a survey checklist. The most significant finding was that teachers lacked whole-class time and that special services intruded to a high degree into the regular classroom day. This scheduling conflict was due to an increase in needed student services and in the proportions of students served. The findings do not single out special-needs or mainstreamed students as the sole cause of the disruptions because this segment of the school population is only a small part of the problem that results in an increased stress level among teachers. What needs to be addressed is how all the needed special services can fit together in the least intrusive or disruptive manner. Two tables are included. (Contains 25 references.) (LMI)

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Administrative Challenges of Integrating Special Needs Learners: A Look at Four B.C. Schools

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Abstract

British Columbia's Year 2000 Program mandated the inclusion of all children into their neighborhood schools, thereby requiring each school to provide all special education services for students who need them. This research assesses the impact of this mandate on instructional programs in four suburban Vancouver elementary schools. The data track how the number and variety of special services affect teachers' ability to provide integrated and coherent whole class instruction. Interviews explore teacher reactions, and allow speculation about the administrative challenges of managing inclusion.

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In 1990, British Columbia implemented the Year 2000 Primary Program. Philosophically oriented towards the American Regular Education Initiative (REI) and the collaborative consultative model of education, it mandates inclusion of all children into the regularn classrooms within their neighborhood schools. The Program supports five major, interrelated goals which aspire to develop the whole child: aesthetic and artistic development, emotional and social development , intellectual development, physical development and social responsibility (Ministry of Education 1990). The program recognizes that some students will require individualized programs and that modification or enhancement of conditions, and additional services must be provided within the framework of general education. Furthermore, it states that classroom teachers, in collaboration with and supported by appropriate personnel, are responsible for the design and implementation of instructional programs, the reporting of student progress, and the supervision of teacher assistants. While specialized settings and resource rooms within the neighborhood schools are not precluded, the emphasis is on the classroom teacher as director of all programs the children in his or her class require.

This study took place when all B.C. schools had fully implemented inclusion. The four elementary schools involved were part of a large district in a suburb of Vancouver. This district enrolls 29,000 students and employs 1500 teachers. Interviews and the analysis of timetables were used to investigate the actual impact of all the special services' arrangements on classrooms and on classroom teachers' instructional programs. This study highlights emerging challenges for teachers, specialists and administrators who must facilitate an increasingly complex system of special services in an orderly and efficient manner.

REI proponents cite fragmented educational approaches and problems of a dual system of Special Education and Regular Education, where there is little communication between the regular and special teachers, as negative features of the pull-out models of special education programs (Will 1986). Arguing that special education services can be provided within the regular classroom environment, Idol (1986) described the collaborative consultation model as a process where all special

and regular education teachers, parents and other staff collaborate to plan, implement, and evaluate a student's program which will be delivered within the classroom setting.

The collaborative consultation format has its critics. Huefner (1988) suggested that the implementation of this model required extensive retraining of both regular and special education teachers in personal communication, team teaching, problem solving, and curriculum frameworks. In addition, he cited the possibility of "turf conflicts" if teachers were unclear about who was responsible for the performance of a specific student. Other opponents have suggested that the additional demands on regular classroom teachers for individualizing instruction for students with disabilities and "the demand for increased instructional attention and teaching skills could result in adverse effects on the achievement levels of students with and without mild disabilities" (Semmel and others 1991, 10).

At the present time there is little evidence about the success or failure of the REI model of Collaborative Consultation where all special services are accommodated within the regular classroom setting. However, two separate surveys have been completed which address teachers' perceptions of REI. Coates (1989), reported that a sample of teachers from Iowa did not express negative perceptions toward the current pull-out programs of Special Education, and were not very supportive of REI. In a more comprehensive assessment of the professional opinions, attitudes and perceptions of elementary teachers, Semmel and associates, reported that "Issues surrounding the purported dual system and fragmented approaches may not be as troublesome in actual school settings as REI proponents infer" (1991, 11). In addition, they found that a relatively high percentage of those surveyed felt that full-time placement of children with disabilities in a regular classroom could negatively affect the distribution of instructional classroom time. This study also indicated that teachers felt that the regular class program is inadequate for addressing the instructional needs of students with disabilities, a perception supported by research which indicates these students need individual or small group instruction (Humphreys and Hall 1980;

Ryan, Short, and Weed 1986; Torgensen and Houck 1980). A major drawback with Semmel's study is that there is no indication about the extent to which the teachers surveyed had had experience with the consultative model of service delivery. It is possible that these teachers feared a new model with which they had had little experience.

Heron and Harris (1993) reported that teacher attitude toward integration of special students is important. A negative attitude may cause a teacher to be unable to respond appropriately to a wide range of individual differences. However, recent research has demonstrated the effectiveness of some strategies which have proven to be valuable in inclusive classes. Suggested educational techniques which meet the needs of a broad range of students and which can easily be implemented within a regular education classroom are outlined by Lewis, Wilson and McLaughlin (1992). These strategies include direct instruction, precision teaching, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, behavior analysis, and computer-assisted instruction.

The Year 2000 Program implicitly accepts the positive studies cited and recommends that teachers provide experiences which can accommodate all students' abilities. The principles of continuous progress (Ministry of Education 1990), integrated learning experiences in the five goals areas, cooperative learning experiences and flexible grouping, unrelated to ability, are recommended in order to maximize the opportunity to learn from each other and to encourage social interactions.

As a result of the Year 2000 Program's principles and goals of instruction, teachers use themes to encourage integration of subject matter. Large, uninterrupted blocks of time can be very important for the students in order to effectively become involved in the projects. In addition, many classroom teachers design instructional programs that require full attendance when they introduce a new theme or concept, read a book to the children which relates to their current theme, or develop a cooperative group lesson. Cooperative classroom learning groups are difficult to encourage when students who come in late or have missed the preceding activity do not participate fully because they do not know what has

happened prior to their arrival. According to Schmuck and Schmuck (1992, 39), a cohesive group and positive classroom climate requires time and careful attention. Classroom teachers need large blocks of uninterrupted time with their whole class not only for academic instruction but in order to develop this social-emotional aspect of the classroom.

Learning climate including the quality of instructional time was also investigated in eight secondary schools by Jane Stallings and Georgea Mohlman (1981). They reported that where there were frequent interruptions during class periods, fewer students were on task, more students misbehaved, and more students were absent. In schools where disruptions were kept to a minimum, teacher morale was higher. While this study involved secondary schools, it is possible that similar student behaviors and teacher attitudes would be exhibited in elementary schools where there was a high rate of interruptions. Interruptions and intrusions were also addressed by the Education Commission of the States in a publication entitled "Good Schools: What Makes Them Work" (1981). They recommended that instructional time should be protected from interruptions and intrusions and that time structures should permit a high degree of flexibility.

In order to establish a good classroom climate, free from interruptions, teachers want considerable control over their daily worklives. Numerous studies which investigate teachers' working conditions suggest that teachers most want influence over operational classroom decisions such as what to teach, how to teach, and which textbooks to use (Bacharach, Bauer, and Shedd 1986; Shedd 1987; Mohrman, Cook, and Mohrman 1978). And teachers feel most deprived about influencing strategic-operational interface decisions such as how students are assigned to classes, how teachers are assigned to classes, and how students are disciplined or promoted (Shedd 1987; Conley, Schmidle, and Shedd 1988).

On a similar theme, Bacharach and associates (Bacharach, Bamberger and Conley 1990; Bacharach, Bauer, and Conley 1986) report that decisional deprivation is related to greater teacher dissatisfaction, more stress and less loyalty to principals. Jevne and Zingle's study at the University of Alberta (1992) investigated the rising

numbers of teachers on long-term disability. They discovered that administrators played a key role in the experience of teachers who developed disabling conditions. The lack of decision-making authority on the part of teachers and the feeling of not being valued by the administration were major causes of stress.

An additional Canadian study, known as the King Report, investigated the worklife of 17,000 teachers (King and Peart 1992). Workload and time demands were the biggest contributors to teacher stress, a lack of encouragement and support from administrators was a close second, followed by disciplinary issues and government policy. King and Peart determined that while 89 percent of teachers believe teaching is a worthwhile job, 77 percent of teachers feel that they have insufficient time to provide adequate help for students who are having difficulty and students with special needs, and 45 percent feel that their workload is too heavy. The King Report's perspective on the possible reasons for high teacher stress in British Columbia is born out by a survey conducted by the Kamloops District Teachers' Association during 1991, where 83 percent of Primary teachers reported increased stress because of the increased workload related to the implementation of new program strategies, integration of special needs students, and the new organizational models of class composition such as multi-aged, dual entry children. Teachers desired more non-instructional days and preparation time (Gloyn 1991). In Coquitlam, B.C., increased workload and increased stress were also cited as an effect of the new curriculum implementation by 30 percent of all teachers surveyed and 47 percent of Primary teacher desired more time for planning and in-service (Joint District/Coquitlam Teachers' Association (CTA) Survey Committee 1992).

These studies suggest that stress and frustration for classroom teachers may be related to the increase in students requiring special services as a result of the ministry mandate of inclusion. This increase in services frequently disrupts the flow of classroom activities. However, the Year 2000 program goals require large uninterrupted blocks of time to enable teachers to develop whole class activities effectively. While the classroom teacher is ultimately responsible for all learning in his/her class, he/she is also often the individual who has the least amount of

control over the special services and school programs arrangements which impact on his/her class.

This issue directs us to ask two major research questions. First, to what extent are classrooms disrupted? For instance, what percentage of time is available for whole class activities, and how do special services' and school programs' (e.g. Music, P.E., Library) times impact on daily classroom schedules? How many students receiving special services are there in a typical classroom? How many different special services and special service staff are required to work with students in a typical classroom? Second, to what extent is teacher concern and dissatisfaction related to the number of intrusions which take away whole class time, and /or the quantity of special service students and specialists with which the classroom teacher must work?

In order to determine the impact of special services on the Year 2000 Primary Program, it is important to understand the range of service programs available in the school system. In the district studied the services include: Learning Assistance (LA) services for students exhibiting slight delays in their development of academic skills; Resource services for students with more serious delays in learning and students who require an individualized education programs (IEP); English as a Second Language (ESL) services for students whose first language is not English; Challenge services for gifted students; Counselling services; Speech and Language Therapy services; services for the Hearing and Vision Impaired; Behavior Management Team services for individual students who exhibit exceptional behavior problems, Teacher Assistants (TA) or Special Education Assistants (SEA) who support individual students needs; Occupational Therapists (OT), and in some classes Boost services are provided involving extra support for classroom teachers when class size exceeds the negotiated limit. These services are delivered by both school staff who work in a single school and by itinerant staff who serve two or more schools. Methods of service delivery include pull-out where both individuals and small groups of students go to the Learning Center, and pull-in where the special education service is delivered within the classroom setting.

Procedures

Four schools were selected that differed in size and special education program organization. The Large school's student population was over four hundred; the Middle-sized school's student population ranged between two hundred and four hundred; the Small school's student population was less than two hundred; and the Alternate school was also a large school with over four hundred students. It was chosen because it's model of delivery combined several special services (LA, ESL, and Resource) into one special service teacher who serviced fewer classrooms but provided all the in-school special service required for a single classroom. This differed from the other schools which tended to provide separate service specialists for separate special service needs or combined only Resource and LA services.

Twenty-seven classroom teachers and four special education teachers were interviewed. The Primary classroom teachers selected were chosen randomly and on a voluntary basis. The number of classroom teachers interviewed was proportionate to the school size, three from the Small school, six from the Middle-sized school, nine from the Large school and nine from the Alternate school because it was also a large school. One special education teacher was interviewed from each of the four schools.

Interviews and data collection proceeded during the months of February, October, November and December of 1993. The tape-recorded interviews commenced with inquiries about how the classroom teacher's timetable was set up and how their regular programs interfaced with the needs of the special education service delivery. After this basic information about the classroom organization was collected, teachers were asked to complete the survey and checklist. The final part of the interview asked about the teacher's feelings about their timetable, special services impact and adequacy, special service delivery format preferences, accommodations made for the special services, and ideals of service delivery. The interviews with the special education teacher followed a similar format.

The survey and checklist were completed by the Primary classroom teachers during the interview process. The first part provided information about the numbers of special services, numbers of students receiving services, numbers of groups of students receiving services, numbers of special service staff delivering the services, and what kinds of services were involved. In the second part, the classroom teachers were asked to complete a check-list which described the delivery format of each special service. The final parts of the survey included a checklist which described the how much impact the special service had on the classroom timetable and whether the service was adequate. A tape recorder was left on during the survey so that comments could be recorded if the teacher did not want to write down a lengthy explanation of why he/she had checked a particular box.

The timetables provided valuable information about the amount of special service time and the amount of school program time. By analyzing the classroom teacher's timetables the amount of whole class time was determined by eliminating both the special service time and the required school program time. Whole class time was calculated as a maximum because many school programs such as Special Occasion Assemblies, School-wide Theme activities, Public Speaking Competitions, and Skating Programs intrude upon the classroom teachers' whole class time but are not included. These extra activities can reduce whole class time by as much as ten percent in any given week.

The timetables also provided other valuable information such as the time and frequency of the special service delivery. In addition, they were used as a reference during the interviews with the classroom teachers.

Results

Table 1 quantifies the information about classroom teachers' timetables and service statistics, while Table 2 displays the average for each of the schools as well as the overall average. If we analyze the numbers of students who receive some form of service in the Primary program, we will see that an average of ten students, or 40 percent of each class, in all four schools' classes receive some form of special

services. Table 1 demonstrates the extreme complexity of the Primary classroom in post-Year 2000 British Columbia. It also reveals the sheer range of individual disabling conditions which may affect students' learning and the quantity and skill range of the educational professionals serving each group of children. Fully 30 percent of whole class time is disrupted as a result of special services and the figure goes up to 50 percent when school program time is also included. The substantial variations between schools and between individual classrooms within schools resulted from differences in student populations served by each school and by each teacher.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

The interviews and survey data suggest that the complex timetables affect teacher satisfaction. Primary teachers with greater than 50 percent whole class time were happier than teachers whose whole class time was significantly reduced or greatly affected by special services and school-wide programs. Because school-wide programs take an average of 20 percent of weekly whole class time and these programs can not easily be reduced, it is understandable why classroom teachers are dissatisfied when special service programs encroach into an additional 40 percent of the whole class time. An example of the frustration experienced by one teacher with only 19 percent whole class time is evident in his/her response to a question about whether the services were adequate for his/her students' needs:

> I would say yes but it's adequate because it's adequate for my needs, not theirs. I guess what I mean to say is, I can't have any more for "me", the children could always use more. I'm just not having "any more!" Whether they get enough or not doesn't enter into it, "I don't want any more!" (L1, "L1's emphasis")

Primary teachers wanted some large uninterrupted whole class blocks of time where they could work on units, themes, Science and Social Studies projects, or even show a video or read a story to their class so that everyone had the same experiences to draw on during follow-up lessons.

> I'd love to have all the Special services in the morning, I'd love to, if that were at all possible. Because I'd love to have all the afternoons to be my class and no one else's. You know so you could do a great Science lesson or a great Art lesson and "just have everyone there as a group!" (M3, "M3's emphasis")

However, if there was a lack of needed services, teachers were also clearly dissatisfied. In the Alternate school, there was a relatively low level of special services, possibly because they had been hit by cut-backs in school-based funding during the the previous Spring. In this school, the Learning Resource teachers had to balance conflicting demands because almost half of the teachers desired more LA time, all of the teachers wanted more Resource time and one third wanted more ESL time. It would appear that teachers definitely desire the needed support services, but want these services to have as little impact on their class teaching time as possible.

> I found the timetable too complex to try to remember who was going where and when. It's really done something to my attitude this year. . . . . Frustrated, angry and resentful. I really resented the intrusion, that I felt like the classroom should be the focus and it wasn't! It was the support! And yet I believe the support is really important too, but it didn't feel like it was working at the time because it was just too "confusing"! (L2, "L2's emphasis")

Disruptions were problematic for teachers, an outcome that parallels Stallings and Mohlman (1981) findings in high schools. Some teachers had more than three special service interruptions per hour during their "worst" block of time. Because of this, teachers desired more input into the scheduling of their special services and school programs. In addition, they wanted reliable, consistent, daily times for their students' services, and those with younger students preferred services during

morning time slots. None of the teachers felt that special service delivery during the last period of the day was appropriate for their students.

Both the total number of special services and the number of special service teachers required to service children's' needs in a teacher's classroom affected that teacher's satisfaction. Generally, those teachers whose class required six or more different service needs were either ambivalent or negative about the special service impact. Most of the teachers felt that the number of special service teachers involved should equal the number of different services they received, although they also felt that communication and collaboration became a problem when numerous services were involved in their class. This was particularly true when they needed to conference with itinerant or part-time teachers. They also desired more time during school hours for meetings or program planning for special needs students.

A more important factor, in every school, appeared to be the total number of groups of children requiring special services in a class. More than six groups of students receiving services clearly caused teachers to become dissatisfied. Those teachers with the most groups of students (8 to 10 groups) were extremely unhappy with their situation. The size of the groups involved in the services was also a factor. If only one student was involved in a service, it was not as disruptive for the classroom teacher, but when more students were involved, the teacher was faced with the problem of making sure that these students didn't miss anything important.

The number of special service students in a class was less important to teachers than the nature of the specific students' disabilities, especially for those few teachers who had students with extremely disruptive or aggressive behaviors.

This research suggests that many teachers are not satisfied with a predetermined format of service. They believe that they should have more input into scheduling decisions and into creating a balance between pull-in and pull-out service delivery. Teachers' comfort level, their compatibility, and the amount of

time and opportunity for collaboration were all important factors for them in determining the best method of service delivery. Many teachers preferred pull-out services because it was less intrusive into their classroom program and because they felt that their students were really receiving the needed skills in a quiet, small-group setting. However, most acknowledged the benefits of pull-in services for early year assessments and for transference of skills into the classroom setting.

Discussion

The most significant aspect of this study is the lack of whole class time and the degree of special service intrusion into the regular classroom teachers' day. These intrusions result both from the mushrooming of needed student services and the increase in the proportions of students served since the neighborhood school concept was accepted philosophically and mandated by law. This study focuses on Primary grade levels because there is the highest need and demand for all student special services at that time. Many of these students will no longer require services when they reach Intermediate grades. Note that this study does not single out special needs or mainstreamed students as the sole cause of the disruptions because this segment of the school population is only a small part of the problem which results in increased stress level amongst teachers.

The special service intrusions into the whole class time contributed to what many teachers sensed as a disoriented school day with too many interruptions for them to provide a coherent educational program. However, where needed services were not adequately provided, classroom teachers were equally distressed about the lack of help for individual students or groups of students. What needs to be addressed is how all of the needed special services can fit together in the least intrusive or disruptive manner.

Despite the relatively small sample size and the differences between schools, teachers with reduced amounts of whole class time, high levels of special service

intrusion, as well as high numbers of special service groups were decidedly more frustrated and stressed than teachers with greater amounts of whole class time, low levels of special service intrusion and low numbers of special service groups.

The results of this study indicate that there are some organizational questions which must be addressed. First, are the problems a result of a longer than anticipated neighborhood school adaptation phase or are these problems systemic? Second, are there more efficient, less disruptive, ways to organize special service support services to reduce the number and extent of classroom intrusions and interruptions and reduce the impact on the classroom teachers' whole class time? Third, are there effective classroom adaptations (e.g. curriculum, teaching technique, grouping) that allow classroom teachers to teach effectively despite frequent interruptions and intrusions?

There is a definite lag between supportive organizational policies for special services and the implementation of the neighborhood school concept. Teachers need large blocks of uninterrupted time in order to implement the goals of their instructional programs. A policy which focuses on developing the most effective delivery of special services in the least intrusive or disruptive manner is urgently required. The need for a systematic administrative policy analysis is evident. The current special education organizational "chaos" has yet to be addressed.

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Table 1. Classroom Timetable and Special Service Data

classroom teacher id	% spec. service time	% school program time	% whole class time	interruptions-worst hr.	# special services	# special groups	# students serviced	total # students	# spec. service staff
L1	51	**31**	**19**	4.5	6	**11**	13	24	7
L2	41	20	41	4.6	7	9	10	26	7
L3	51*	22	37	3.5	6	9	10	26	7
L4	24	19	60	3.1	6	6	15	23	6
L5	20	18	63	2.3	3	4	10	25	4
L6	30*	20	55	3.1	5	7	**16**	21	5
L7	25*	15	71	1.5	3	5	10	24	3
L8	12	14	74	1.5	2	3	11	23	2
L9	12	20	68	2.3	2	3	5	21	2
M1	45	13	46	2.3	5	7	15	24	6
M2	**60***	22	32	3.8	5	8	13	25	6
M3	39	14	44	**5.0**	**8**	10	15	25	**8**
M4	40*	14	48	3.1	6	7	8	22	6
M5	27*	14	64	2.3	5	6	11	25	6
M6	06	20	73	1.5	2	2	5	25	2
S1	44*	24	46	4.0	5	9	12	21	4
S2	46*	22	40	3.0	5	6	7	19	5
S3	30	22	56	4.6	4	8	7	22	4
A1	23*	20	69	2.3	2	2	8	22	1
A2	18	22	61	2.3	2	4	7	22	2
A3	24	21	54	3.2	4	4	6	22	3
A4	25	20	59	2.3	2	4	10	24	2
A5	34	18	55	1.3	5	5	8	25	3
A6	20	18	64	2.4	4	4	14	23	3
A7	40*	24	52	3.3	7	8	11	25	6
A8	30*	18	57	2.0	5	6	6	25	5
A9	02	29	69	1.5	1	1	1	20	1

*Considerable overlap with School Program Time

Table 2. School Mean of Timetable and Special Service Data

school building	% spec. service time	% school program time	% whole class time	interruptions per hour	# special services	# special groups	# students serviced	# special service staff
Large	29	20	54	2.9	4.4	6	11	5
Medium	36	16	51	3	5.2	7	11	6
Small*	40	22	48	3.8	4.7	8	9	4
Alternative	24	21	60	2.2	3.5	4	8	3
All Schools	30	20	55	2.8	4	6	10	4

*The mean scores for the Small school are slightly inflated because no Kindergarten classes were included in the classroom samples.